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NATIONAL LEVEL ANALYSIS OF THE DEGREE TO WHICH POPULAR PARTICIPATION IS A REALITY

(A case of Nigeria)

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LC/NAIROBI

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN AFRICA

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A B S T R A C T

This paper concerns "National-level analysis of the degree to which Popular Participation is a reality" - case of Nigeria.

The paper first highlighted the importance of popular participation in recovery and development process. It goes on to identify the programmes initiated by the government of Nigeria in which popular participation is a reality. The programmes such as, War Against Indiscipline (WAI) which centers around the people's attitude and behaviour in the offices and public places, and the environmental sanitation.

The Agencies for Mass Education through which the Nigerian Adult population learn how to use their Heads, Hands and Hearts (3H) in order to be useful to themselves and the society in general.

The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which has awaken the Nigerian populace to use their local resources for creative activities which will make them self-reliant.

Directorate for Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) through which Nigerians embark upon different construction work in order to open up the rural and remote areas of the country.

Mass Mobilisation for Social and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) a director through which Nigerian peoples are mobilised for the purpose of social justice, peace, love, tolerance, hard work, honesty and discipline so as to be able to revive the country's economy.

National Directorate of Employment (NDE) through which the Nigerian youth are trained in gainful occupations so as to be self-employed.

Better life for Rural Women (BLW) focuses its attention to rural illiterate women - in order to lift their standard of living.

The People's Bank and very soon, Community Bank provides loans to individuals and groups to enable them increase on their businesses which will otherwise increase their income.

The People's or the voluntary Agencies and Social Associations initiated Programmes which were in existance even before government initiated ones. All these Agencies, Associations, Clubs, Brigades, Fronts etc. have been concerned with the development of their different communities in particular and the nation in general. Members of these associations have and are still actively participating in development activities physically by initiating and executing projects such as construction of feeder roads, clinics, school, bore-holes to provide water and also contributing monetarily for national and international events.

In the conclusion, the emphasis is on the full involvement of the Nigerian populace in all aspects of decision making related to the planning of their economies and societies. People should be made to understand that only, and in fact hard-work is the only surety to progress.

M. Nnoki (Mrs).

NATIONAL-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF THE DEGREE TO WHICH POPULAR PARTICIPATION IS A REALITY - NIGERIA AS A CASE

INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to be called upon to present a paper at this International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa.

An underlying assumption of interest in the topic of this paper is that of "an analysis and evaluation of the programmes which popular participation is a reality". With this assumption, the paper is going to identify major programmes in Nigeria. These programmes are going to be divided into Government initiated and voluntary organisations initiated. These programmes will be presented in form of analysis and how people actually participate and the degree of achievement made.

This paper is not out to define terminologies for these have been dealt with by other topics but since we all agree that popular participation is where people get involved collectively in efforts to influence policy decisions, more direct involvement in the political process. Collective action by the people to improve themselves and also improve on government's policy. Direct or indirect involvement in:

i) identification of social needs and resources to meet these needs;

ii) initiation and formulation of policies and plans to harness mobilize and manage resources to meet societal needs;

iii) physical execution of projects aimed at meeting societal needs;

iv) Evaluation of efforts made by both government and the people themselves toward satisfaction of societal needs.

Direct involvement can be in form of contribution of ideas, cash, labour and materials by all.

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Indirect involvement is where representatives of the people in groups or unions, clubs, brigade, etc. take part in development activities within the context of democracy and freedom.

These types of participation involve different approaches, which again, this paper is not ready to discuss but one of such approaches that interests the writer is integrated approach which involve multi-sectoral efforts consisting of:

i) Provision of infrstructural facilities like roads, schools, earth dams etc.;

ii) Introduction of new techniques, new ideas and enlightment

iii) Establishment of service agencies like banks, cooperative societies etc.;

iv) Organization and mobilization of people for productive ventures.

THE BACKGROUND

After a bizarre four years three months civilian rule of the second Republic and foreign exploitations had exhausted the nation morally and economically, it was realised that the nation's ship has sunk a three quarters deep in the ocean of fictitious debts.

The population had to be mobilised for national recovery. But alas! about 65% of our adults who are supposed to revive the nation are illiterates. Adult education necessarily become a weapon for this revival. Though the attempt in this area was made by the regime by launching the literacy campaign in 1982, the good will was turned to political propaganda which resulted in the downfall of the regime.

GOVERNMENT INITIATED PROGRAMMES

Before the collapse of the second Republic, the President, Shagari presented a bill titled "Economic stabilisation Act of 1982" (temporary provisions). He told the nation that, 'our economic situation is serious and calls for urgent solutions. "I have therefore found it necessary to introduce some measures which will help to contain the situation. These measures taken by themselves are not adequate response to our present economic situation. I am therefore placing before you Enabling Bill, the passing of which will enable me to deal promptly and decisively with the situation".

Of course, this bill was passed without any debate and that same day Shagari signed it into law. The same morning in his speech he had called for sacrifice similar to that made to save the unity of the country during the civil war. He said, and I quote:

> I am convinced we are capable of weathering the storm whatever the degree of sacrifice that will be necessary. We have shown the world that we can fight to maintain the severeignty and intergrity of this nation. If it is now necessary we will do it again in order to demonstrate that we are again prepared to fight to ensure the survival of our country.

In his national broadcast on Saturday 1st October, 1983, he placed structural adjustment firmly at the centre of his programme for economic recovery.

In this he said, and I quote:

> To survive and stabilise the economy on a long time basis it is imperative that the country now begins the structural adjustment process required for renewed economic bouyancy. Macro economic and sectoral policy changes will have to begin in order to shift resources to the productive sectors of the economy.

Jss Aaa (S.A.P.) or is it tructural Adjustment Programme? This is how it dawned on the people without concrete and deeper understanding of what it is.

The commrades in arms associated with "my dear fellow country men" greetings at the wake of a new government brought by a coup; took up the challenge and created Directorates here and there. First came the WAI Brigade (War Against Indiscipline); then Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI); then the Landable Mass Mobilisation for Social and Economic Recovery (MAMSER); then National Directorate for Employment(NDE) and what have you - is it Better Life for Rural Women (dwellers)?

In short, these are the early government initiated programmes untill recently, the People's Bank which is yet to be launched in many States of the country. This will also give birth to Community Bank to complete that sector which started with Agricultural and Cooperative Bank.

Before I discuss the degree to which popular participation in these programmes is a reality, it is earlier mentioned that, there are other programmes which are not initiated by the government and these programmes are:-

PEOPLE INITIATED PROGRAMMES

Organisations and Associations for participation in development activities is not new in Nigeria.

Here, we are aiming at getting people everywhere to be aware of, to understand and take part in, and ultimately to control the economic and social changes which are taking place among them. The idea of positive approach to the handling of affairs which aims at developing the initiative of the individual and the community and at obtaining the willing participation of the people in programmes for promoting their own betterment.

What we have witnessed in Nigeria since independence are situations whereby government pretends it has the resources to meet all or majority of the needs of people. A glaring example of this was the taking over of the primary schools in 1975/76 - which it later returned to the States and then the States handed over to the Local Governments which definately lack money to finance these schools.

The present recession in Nigeria since 1983 has made the Government to approach people for their development through popular participation in development programmes.

Many communities that were waiting for the Manner to come from the government quickly realised that the Manner will never come - hence started to organise themselves into Associations, Clubs, Unions, Brigades, Forums, Fronts and what have you. All these have different names according to their programmes. Programmes which concerns Education, Social Welfare, Community development, Cooperatives, business, traders, market, spacial programmes like women, youth, handicapped etc.

The members of these associations, Unions and Clubs etc, willingly participate by competitive donations, levies or local taxation and physically taking part in execution of the programmes.

HOW DO PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN THESE PROGRAMMES? THE DEGREE TO WHICH POPULAR PARTICIPATION IS A REALITY?

Modern development is defined in terms of self-reliant, intellectual, scientific and technological achievements and national development is measured by how far the people of that nation are able to make, innovate and invent things themselves. We have to recognise that man is the master of his destiny and is endowed with the corpus of knowledge which enables him through utilization of locally available resources to effect development in his life.

To survive, people must have an awareness and to become aware, they must be literate. Any circumstance that calls for any position must have a purpose - such a purpose must be based on knowledge, imbued with wisdom, courage and bravery which are some of the elements of natural virtue of an individual.

Adult Education, though taken by Nigerian Society to be a low-cost area of educational system, yet from the point of view of return on investment, it is the most immediately productive and profitable for the national economy. It is in view of this, the government of Nigeria created Agencies for mass literacy all over the country. Most of the State governments declared war against illiteracy. The illiterate government workers were given up to one year to "get literate or get out"! order. Some States gave the illiterates only six months within which to "bridge the gab between themselves and the read and write easte, failing that they are to ship out altogether". Today these States enjoy about 80% (eighty percent) literacy and there is great improvement in all sectors of the social system

Along side with the Agencies, voluntary organisations have pioneered literacy teaching and the management of voluntary learning by those adults who are not covered by government educational priority programmes. They have also availed the women who consist the bulk of illiterates in Nigeria, opportunities to be literate. It is a common scene particularly in the northern parts of the country because of religious obligations women attending night schools organised by these voluntary schools.

The National Council for Adult Education, which was founded in 1971 by Professor E.A. Fugbiyele and a group of educationists has only succeeded in passing a number of resolutions and helped in the dissemination of information and research findings in Adult Education. Thus, it has not achieved much to write home about.

The W.A.I. Brigade:- This was introduced to check the general indiscipline that has eaten deep into our society. It was welcomed by the generality of the people. War Against Indiscipline focusses its attention to the attitudes and behaviours of the people in their homes and public places. Though it sets aside the last Saturday of every month for environmental sanitation - it has remained a reality only in villages and few towns in the country.

Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) with its associated suffering has gone through several stages. Practically, in my own opinion, it is among the best programmes that has actually awaken the populace of the country to realise their own creative potentials and utilise same for the purpose of development and self-reliance. Here, people have learnt to make the best use of local resources that are in abundance in the country and at the same time learn to manage what is available - in short, SAP has succeeded 90% in bringing about numerous cottage industries in the country - no wonder the popular slogan - "FROM SCRAP TO WEALTH!"

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DFRRI, with its sister, Agency for Rural Development are very active in providing opportunities for the people to participate in development activities. Such as constructing roads to open up the rural and remote areas of the country; providing water through bore-holes, building bridges and culvets where there are none. Setting up model villages for the most isolated groups of people in the country, (a case of Koma people on Mambila Plateau of Gongola State).

MAMSER AND THE PEOPLE - Originates ideas and principles which border on how to become self-reliant; socially just, and economically strong and firm, which it disseminate through different channels. This programme feeds the people with information on positive thinking, which is properly articulated and written by different specialists especially philosophers and human resources managers.

Infact, MAMSER is vigorously trying to see that the populace, dear Nigerians get the best out of its lofty ideas.

We have produced giants who during their time have moved people along with them. People like Mallam Aminu Kano, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, General Yakubu Gowon, General Murtala Mohammed.

Nigerians are marching to the promise land through MAMSER - singing "Nigeria we hail Thee..... our own dear native land!.... Out of date? Wait a minute, "Arise all compatriots

Nigerians walk MAMSER, laugh MAMSER, dream MAMSER. Infact, all Nigerians have been MAMSERISED. MAMSER is goodness, love, courage, sacrifice, genuine person to person relationship, peace, happiness, joy and above all, work, patience and tolerance. MAMSER is The Soul of A New Nigeria.

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) with its work-apprenticeship oriented moster is paying off. Large number of unemployed youth have graduated from its programmes and have either been absorbed into government services or self-employed. Nigerians have the believe that this will go along way in solving the problem of unemployment in the country.

BOOM! came the Better Life for Rural Women (dwellers). Born and nurse by the country's First Lady, Mrs Maryam Babangida has penetrated the nooks and corners of the country in search for rural women in order to engage them in activities which will improve their standard of living and also avail them the opportunity to participate in national affairs. Infact, when I was writing this paper, it was mentioned in the news that Better life committee is intending to establish markets for women all over the country. That these markets will serve as a meeting place where ideas are exchanged, problems identified and ways to solve these problems are highlighted.

Dear fellow country women, is that not great?

Already in existance, were, and still are numerous women Associations all over the country. They participate physically by actually initiating and executing various projects especially those that affect their well being, such projects like building of maternity clinics, school blocks for their children; economically by donating their hard earned money towards particular projects. Emotionally supporting their male counterparts any time a project is being undertaken. They do this by cooking food, using their beautiful voices to sing which otherwise make the males forget their sorrows and concentrate their energies to the on going projects.

A very outstanding instant of women association is Ondo Country Women Association which has educated many illiterate rural women and have executed various projects, established women centres where they learn different trades. Also, the members of this association go from village to village identifying the women problems, initiating and embarking on those projects that help the villagers to solve those problems.

Other women organisations, clubs and associations, such as Women in Nigeria (WIN); National Council of Women of Nigeria; Nigerian Army Officers Wives Association (NAOWA); Jam'iyar Matan Arewa and host of them serve as a driving force behind rural transformation in the country.

Have you heard the News?

"This una bank - o,
make una hollam
well - well - o".

IBB, 1989.

The above quotation in what we call "pigin English" are the words of our President, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida when launching the "Peoples' Bank" in Lagos, in October, 1989. Our President used the people's popular language as a sign of identifying himself with them. People's Bank though yet to be launched in most of the States will soon give birth to Community Bank. It is too early to quantify but "so far so good", said the beneficiaries.

In order to Liberate our dear brothers and sisters from the hands of white minority governments Nigerians have participated in the struggle - physically, economically and morally to see that Africa remain Africans and any nationals remain strangers enjoying the type of hospitality honestly associated with African people. This kind of participation was clearly manifested in Angolan's independent of Murtala's fame. And of course, SWAPO's victory at elections in Namibia of Babangida's fame.

Our arrows now are pointing to racist's South Africa - which popular participation by all free Africans must aim at 100% achievement and Nigeria, the giant of Africa is leading and will continue to lead till our goal is realised.

CONCLUSION

Participation of people in recovery and development programmes should have the full involvement of people in all aspect of decision-making related to the disability of their communities and societies. People should be made to understand that work, and honest hardwork is the only secret to success; that equitable distribution of income or wealth is not possible without participation and full participation of the people in development programmes will bring about a change in attitude towards desirable work, persisting to the point where people can be said to appreciate their social obligations and responsibilities.

To achieve this, people must be educated and enlightened on what to participate and how to participate in it. This is what provides for mass education in rural in Nigeria.

In conjuction, when they have been educated, they have to be mobilised. With mobilisation, it also creates awareness of people about their physical, cultural, international social, economic and political environments and forces that promote their progress and well being.

Mass mobilisation is a two-way approach to bridge the communication gap between the people and their government. It is a deliberate attempt by the government to make people more aware, to make them more capable of solving their social, economic, cultural, political and environmental problems either on their own or in collaboration with the government.

Participatory democracy can only flourish when it has strong roots in a self-reliant nation with a sense of social responsibility. In view of this, means should be found to bring the nation to realise its own creative potentials, the nation itself is strengthened and prepared to meet the need for adaptation in the face of change.

SUGGESTIONS

It is accepted world wide that people are greatest resource and to be able to effectively and efficiently mobilise them to fully participate in the recovery process - the following are suggested:

1. Means should be found to permit their energy and creativity;
2. Recovery and development process should continue to be broadened and more effective;
3. Decision-making should be decentralised to encourage greater entrepreneurship and promoting individual initiative;
4. In the formulation, implementation and monitoring of programmes at national level, the entire people should be involved.

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